

Codenames by bacta_junkie

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Genre: F/M, Written literally five minutes after finishing the show

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Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

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Summary:

The crew have always used codenames when it's important. (In which Fist Wizard goes missing, Fight Ninja and Laser Guy and Meat Punch worry, and Survivor comes home.)

Codenames

Author's Note:

I watched the entire show in one sitting. Then I started writing this five minutes later. I'm not sorry.

So it goes like this:

When Mike Wheeler first meets Lucas Sinclair, they are still too young to know that they will one day build radios, or be chased by government helicopters, or even that they will be best friends. They are too young to know much of anything at all, except that they are both soldiers.

It is the summer of 1977, the Vietnam War is still fresh in the world's memory, and Mike and Lucas play Army in the woods, like many little boys do.

They do not stray too far from their houses. They know, even at such a young age, that the woods are dangerous.

(Seven years later, from these very woods, a beast from another dimension will steal their best friend. They do not know.)

They forge a bond, that summer, built from imaginary battles, and having houses close together.

"We should come up with code names," Mike says, one random evening before going home for dinner. "So that nobody else can tell who we're talking about."

"Who would be listening to us?" Lucas asks, unaware of the experiments taking place just outside of town.

"I don't know. Bad men?" Mike says with a shrug.

It takes a bit of argument and brainstorming, but eventually, they settle on Laser Guy (for Lucas) and Fight Ninja (for Mike).

It's only a few weeks later, on their first day of school, that Will is added to their group. It takes the majority of the year, and at least two rumbles on the playground, but Lucas eventually warms to the new guy, and Will becomes the dreamer. His codename- chosen the day they finish their first game of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons- is Fist Wizard.

As they age, the three gather names for much of their town. School becomes 'prison'; the downtown is 'space'. ("My mom went to space today while I was in prison.") Nancy is The Elf, and when Dustin joins, he is Meat Punch.

The names evolve, too. By the time Will goes missing, his name has been shortened to Wizard; Dustin is Curly, and Will is Ninja. Lucas elected to remain Laser Guy, because Laser Guy is a timeless name at any age.

When they find Eleven, there is a short debate over what her code name will be. This, for once, might actually be a matter important enough to require the use of them, so it is paramount that they choose something both fitting and clandestine.

Dustin suggests 'Wizard', at first, because of her powers. He concedes when it's pointed out that reassigning Will's codename might lead to confusion if Will comes back. Lucas suggests Princess, and then Queen when Mike makes a face.

Mike settles in on Warrior almost immediately, and refuses to budge.

It is, surprisingly, El herself who finally settles the matter.

"Survivor," she says, in that quiet voice that's also somehow louder than the whole room. "Call me Survivor."

When the whole ordeal is done, and Will is home, and El is *gone*, they all quietly, silently agree to retire the codenames. It seems almost

childish at this point.

And it ends like this:

It is the last weekend in July, 1989. Six years have passed since the weekend when the world went Upside Down. Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, 2nd Edition has just been released, and all four are excited to play one last round before college.

Mike and Dustin are bound for MIT. It's been the dream since they first heard about it; the place where the people like them, the freaks and the losers, run the whole show.

Will is fixing for a good pre-med program- he got a good look at the insides of hospitals in the months following his ordeal, especially once he came out about the whole 'coughing up worms' thing. But first, he'll spend a year driving across the country, seeing everything he can. He wants to experience something new, something big.

And Lucas leaves for basic training in just a few weeks.

So it is with the heaviest of hearts that Mike sets up his basement for their last game of D&D- possibly ever. The snacks are brought out, the table is set up, the figurines placed and the graph paper maps laid out-

With a spark and a crack, the ceiling lights burst. Everything hums, and Mike feels a throbbing in his chest he hasn't felt since-

The lights come back, and El is *there*.

She looks to have aged as much as he has- her hair is longer, at least. In the moment he has to appraise her, he notes that she's thin, much too thin, and she seems to have barely grown in height since he saw her last.

But her eyes, God, they're exactly the same. She stares at him, her entire body trembling, a single stream of blood inching out her nose.

She stumbles and nearly collapses, and Mike catches her.

With haste he didn't know he had, he gets her to the couch, his mind racing and blank at the same time. She's here. *She's here.*

"You came back," he says, because he still can't believe it.

"Of course I did," she promises. It was never a question of *if*. Only ever *when*.

When she's settled in and he's gotten her something to eat that will tie her over until he can find something good, something real, Mike sneaks his old handheld radio from his desk drawer.

"Laser Guy, this is Fight Ninja," he says. "Come in, Laser Guy. Over."

He imagines he probably sounds much too excited, but he gets an answer almost immediately. "Laser Guy here," Lucas answers, because they only use the codenames when it's important, so this must be a big deal. "What's going on? Over."

"Survivor has come home," Mike says, his voice absolutely dripping with relief, with joy. "Muster the cavalry. I repeat, muster the cavalry. *Survivor has come home.*"

They don't get around to playing D&D that night. They have stranger things to do.